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Le but de cette étude était d'examiner le discours oral d'élèves de 9e année provenant de deux programmes différents d'immersion française à la CEPGM : immersion au primaire et immersion tardive (au début du secondaire). Un groupe de 15 élèves pour chacun des deux programmes ainsi qu'un groupe témoin francophone ont subi un test d'expression orale. D'après les résultats, on pense (1) que les élèves de l'immersion au primaire auraient des connaissances intuitives du français plus développées que les élèves de l'immersion tardive et (2) que le manque de contact avec les francophones du même âge causerait non seulement un développement plus lent de la grammaire et du vocabulaire, mais aussi un manque de familiarité avec les expressions du langage parlé en dehors de la classe

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AN ANALYSIS OF ORAL DISCOURSE IN TWO TYPES OF FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS

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RESUME

Le but de cette étude était d'examiner de plus près le discours oral d'élèves de 9e année provenant de deux programmes différents d'immersion française: immersion primaire et immersion tardive (Cycle I). Dans chaque groupe il y avait quinze élèves. Un groupe témoin français a été inclus pour fin de comparaison.

On a administré un test d'expression orale à chaque élève. Le test était composé de cinq séries d'images que les élèves devaient décrire. Dans l'analyse des données on a considéré deux aspects du discours oral: le développement syntactique et les phénomènes d'hésitation dans le discours Le développement syntactique a été évalué à l'aide de six mesures basées sur les unités "T". Les phénomènes d'hésitation ont été évalués à l'aide de quatre mesures se rapportant à des pauses vides et des pauses pleines dans le discours.

Les résultats indiquent que: (1) la longueur moyenne des unités "T" correctes du groupe d'immersion primaire était nettement supérieure à celle du groupe d'immersion tardive. (2) Les filles dans les deux programmes ont produit un nombre d'unités "T" qui était nettement supérieur à celui produit par le groupe d'immersion tardive. Les filles ont aussi produit plus d'unités "T" correctes que les garçons. Cependant il n'y avait pas de différence significative entre les sexes quant aux pourcentage d'unités "T" correctes. (3) Concernant les mesures des hésitations, il n'y avait pas de différences significatives ni entre les deux programmes ni entre les sexes. (4) Le nombre d'unités correctes produit par les deux groupes d'immersion

était nettement inférieur à celui produit par le groupe témoin français. (5) La longueur moyenne des unités "T" correctes du groupe d'immersion tardive était nettement inférieure à celle du groupe témoin francophone, tandis qu'il n'y avait pas de différence significative ici entre le groupe d'immersion primaire et le groupe témoin.(6) Le groupe témoin francophone a produit beaucoup moins de répétitions et de faux départs que les deux groupes d'immersion. (7) Il y avait certaines différences entre le groupe témoin francophone et les deux groupes d'immersion concernant le contenu des pauses pleines.

D'après les résultats de cette étude, on pense (1) que les étudiants de l'immersion primaire auraient des connaissances intuitives plus développées que les étudiants de l'immersion tardive et (2) que le manque de contact avec les locuteurs natifs du même âge causerait non seulement un développement plus lent de la grammaire et du vocabulaire, mais aussi un manque des caractéristiques stylistiques du langage parlé en-dehors de la classe.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine more closely the oral discourse patterns of French immersion students. Two groups of students participated in this study: an early immersion group and a two-year late (Cycle I) immersion group. There were fifteen students in each group and all of them were grade 9 students. A French control group was included for comparison purposes.

Each student was administered an oral production test in French. The test consisted of five sets of pictures which the students had to describe. In the analysis of the data, two aspects of oral discourse were considered: syntactic development and hesitation phenomena. Syntactic development was assessed by six measures based on the T-unit. Hesitation phenomena were assessed by four measures pertaining to filled and unfilled pauses in the speech flow.

The results indicate that: (1) The early immersion students produced significantly longer correct T-units than the Cycle I immersion students. (2) The female students in both programs produced significantly more T-units and more correct T-units than the male students. However, the percentage of correct T-units produced by the female students did not differ significantly from that produced by the male students. (3) There were no significant program or sex differences on any of the measures pertaining to the hesitation phenomena. (4) The two immersion groups produced significantly fewer correct T-units than the French control group. (5) The Cycle I immersion group produced significantly shorter correct T-units than the French control group and there was no significant

difference between the latter group and the early immersion group on this measure. (6) The two immersion groups had significantly more repetitions and false starts in their speech than the French control group. (7) There were a number of differences between the immersion students and the French controls in the content of the filled pauses.

The findings of this study, suggest (1) that early immersion students may have a better intuitive knowledge of French than Cycle I immersion students and (2) that the absence of contact with native peers may result not only in a slower development of grammar and vocabulary skills, but also in a lack of familiarity with the stylistic characteristics of the social register used outside the classroom.

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The purpose of this study was to examine more closely the oral production patterns of French immersion students and to assess whether there were any significant differences in performance between students attending an early immersion program and those attending a Cycle I immersion program.

A longitudinal evaluation of these two programs (Adiv, in preparation) reveals that from Secondary I (grade 7) to Secondary II (grade 8) the level of French proficiency of students attending the Cycle I immersion program improved considerably whereas no such improvement was noted for the early immersion students at the same grade levels. Furthermore, in Secondary III, IV and V (grades 9, 10, 11) there were practically no significant differences between the Cycle I immersion students and the early immersion students, in spite of the fact that the latter group had had more intensive exposure to French since kindergarten.

These findings seem to contradict the commonly held belief that cumulative time of instruction in the second language results in greater proficiency (for some research findings on this issue see Burstall,et al. 1974; Carroll, 1975). Moreover, teachers who have daily contact with immersion students claim that early immersion students express themselves with greater ease in various classroom situations than late immersion students. Since it is possible that this aspect of linguistic competence was not tapped by previously administered French language tests, it was decided to compare the oral proficiency of students in early immersion and Cycle I immersion programs in basis of more discourse oriented features.

Discourse analysis is a fairly recent field of investigation in second language development. Moreover, it covers a broad variety of issues such as contextual appropriateness, turn-taking systems in conversations, and fluency of performance (see,for example, Hatch and Long 1980). Interrelated with these factors are more linguistically based variables such as grammatical complexity and vocabulary size (Arthur et al. 1980).

A natural unit of discourse which has not received much attention in second language research is the oral monologue. Hatch and Long (1980) note that a monologue requires careful pre-planning and frequent readjustments as the speaker receives non-verbal cues such as nods of the head or frowns from the listener. A behavioral phenomena which seems to be closely associated with verbal pre- and co-planning is the pattern of hesitations which can be noted in both native and second language discourse. MacWhinney and Osser (1977) investigated the role of 13 varieties of hesitations in the native speech of five-year old children. They found that hesitations served three major functions: pre-planning , co-planning and avoidance of superflous verbalizations. The study also revealed that certain types of hesitations were used more frequently by boys than by girls. In particular it was found that boys produced more superflous verbalizations than girls.

The role of hesitations is particularly interesting in second language development since the planning of grammatical structure and the recall of vocabulary may exert more pressure when the appropriate linguistic form is readily available to the speaker in another language, namely his or her first language. The present study was, therefore, designed to include a number of hesitation related variables in the analysis of the immersion students' speech patterns.

The Programs

The two immersion programs involved in this study differ from one another on three aspects: (1) the grade level at which the immersion program begins, (2) the duration of the immersion experience and (3) the intensity of instruction in French during the immersion period.

In the early immersion program practically all instruction is in French from kindergarten through grade 2. From grade 3 the program becomes bilingual and in grades 4, 5 and 6 instruction in French constitutes only 40% of the total curriculum. This immersion program is followed by a post-immersion program at the high school level consisting of two daily periods of French instruction. One of these periods is devoted to a Language Arts course and the other to a content subject such as History or Geography.

In the Cycle I immersion program the intense French immersion period occurs at the high school level. In most of the schools that offer this program, 83% of all instruction in Secondary I and II (grades 7 and 8) is in French. From Secondary III (grade 9) onwards the Cycle I immersion students attend a post-immersion program similar to that of the early immersion students.

Method

The Samples

Thirty Secondary III students who had previously attended one of two alternate immersion programs participated in this study. Half of them had attended an early immersion program and the other half had attended a Cycle I immersion program. In order to minimize a possible teacher effect, the students in each immersion group were randomly chosen from two different schools. Nine francophone students attending a regular French school at the

same grade level were included for comparison purposes. Approximately half of the students in each group were male and the other half were female.

Test materials and Procedures

An oral production test was administered to each student. The test consisted of five sets of pictures. Sets I, II and V contained a series of pictures depicting a humorous story. In each case the student was asked to narrate the story in as much details as possible. Sets III and IV depicted people in a pensive mood. Here the student was asked to make up a story about these people. It was felt that the inclusion of such non-action oriented pictures would force students to express themselves beyond the realm of objective description. Moreover, in creating his or her own story, the speaker may have to be more explicit since the listener has no other frame of reference. Thus, the test was designed to elicit a number of different aspects of communicative competence .

All the students were tested individually and each testing session lasted approximately fifteen minutes. The entire session was taperecorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Procedure for analysis of the data

The tapes were transcribed using a conventional French orthographic transcription. In the analysis of the data, ten measures of evaluation were considered. Six of these measures are quantitative and qualitative indices of syntactic development, some of which have been noted to be closely associated with overall second language proficiency (Larsen-Freeman 1978). The

other four measures pertain to various hesitation phenomena and have been adapted from MacWinney and Osser (1977). A short description of each measure is given below.

(1) The average number of T-units. The T-unit was used as an indice of syntactic development. A T-unit has been defined as "a main clause plus all subordinate clauses and nonclausal structures attached to or embedded in it" (Hunt, 1970:4). One criticism of this type of analysis has been that it considers coordinate noun phrases or coordinate verb phrases as a single T-unit, whereas coordinate sentences are counted as separate T-units (Ney, 1966). This problem may be especially salient in oral discourse where phrases are often strung together without clearly defined boundaries. In consequence, it was decided to consider both coordinate sentences and coordinate verb phrases as separate T-units in this study, e.g.,

a) Le matin il se lève et il a fait tomber son horloge.
In the morning he gets up and he made his clock fall down.(2 T-units)

b' Le matin il se réveille et devient faché parce que...
In the morning he wakes up and gets angry because... (2 T-units)

In order to establish the average number of T-units produced by each group, the number of T-units produced by each student within a given group was counted and a group mean was then computed.

(2) The average number of words. For this measure, the number of words of all the T-units produced by each student in a given group was

counted and a mean was then computed for each group.

(3) The average length of a T-unit. To obtain the average length of a T-unit, the total number of words produced by each student in a given group was divided by the number of T-units produced by that student and a mean was then computed for each group.

(4) The average number of correct T-units. To obtain the average number of correct T-units, the number of correct T-units produced by each student in a given group was counted and a mean was then computed for each group.

(5) The percentage of correct T-units. For this measure, the number of correct T-units produced by each student in a given group was divided by the total number of T-units produced by that student. A mean ratio was then computed for each group. All ratios were multiplied by 100.

(6) The average length of a correct T-unit. To obtain the average length of a correct T-unit, the total number of words in the correct T-units produced by each student in a given group was divided by the number of correct T-units produced by that student and a mean was then computed for each group.

(7) The average number of unfilled pauses. An unfilled pause is defined as a period of non-vocalization occuring within the flow of speech. For each student within a given group, the number of these pauses was counted and a mean was then computed for each group.

(8) The average number of filled pauses. Such pauses are not left void of vocalization, but consist of fillers such as "hm...", "ah...ah...", "puis/pis" (then), "tu sais/t'sais" (you know), etc. Here again the number of such pauses produced by each student in a given group was counted and a mean was then computed for each group.

(9) The average number of repetitions. This measure refers to a type of pause which is filled by repeated or stuttered material as in "m... maison" (house), "il lance le... le... le réveil-matin" (he throws the alarm clock). For each student in a given group the number of such repetitions was counted and a mean was then computed for each group.

(10) The average number of retraced false starts. This measure pertains to the correction of one or more words through substitution, deletion or addition of material, e.g., "il lit sa...son journal" (he reads her. . his newspaper), "un jour elle a dit son mari... elle dit à son mari..." (one day she told her husband... she tells/says to her husband...). For each student in a given group, the number of retraced false starts was counted and a mean was then computed for each group.

Results

The linguistic data was analyzed in two ways. First a two-way analysis of variance procedure with program (early immersion and Cycle I immersion) and sex as the independent variables was used to assess significant differences in linguistic performance between the two immersion groups. Second, a one-way

analysis of variance was used to compare the performance of the students in the immersion programs to that of the francophone group. Exclusion of the French control group from the two-way analysis was motivated by the small number of subjects in that group.

The results of the two-way analysis of variance are shown in Table 1. The only variable on which the two immersion groups differed significantly from one another was the average length of a correct T-unit ($F = 5.44$, $p < .05$). Thus, the early immersion students produced significantly longer correct T-units than the Cycle I immersion students. The comparison of the results shows the difference between early immersion and Cycle I immersion to be slightly more pronounced for the female students (early immersion $\bar{X} = 7.30$, Cycle I immersion $\bar{X} = 6.09$) than for the male students (early immersion $\bar{X} = 6.92$ Cycle I immersion $\bar{X} = 6.34$).

This trend of higher scores for the female students is reflected in the results of practically all the measures of evaluation pertaining to the T-unit analysis. However, only in the case of the average number of T-units ($F = 4.68$, $p. < .05$) and in the case of the average number of <u>correct</u> T-units ($F = 4.41$, $p. < .05$) were the differences significant.

An informal comparison between the results on these two variables (average number of T-units and average number of <u>correct</u> T-units) reveals that the Cycle I immersion students (male students $\bar{X} = 45.12$, female students $\bar{X} = 55.71$) scored numerically higher than the early immersion students (male students $\bar{X} = 39.57$, female students $\bar{X} = 52.75$) on the quantitative measure (average number of T-units). However, on the qualitative measure (average number of <u>correct</u> T-units), the early immersion students (male students $\bar{X} = 15.86$, female students $\bar{X} = 25.00$) scored higher than the

Cycle I immersion students (male students $\bar{X}$ = 15.62, female students $\bar{X}$ = 20.57).

The results of the four measures pertaining to hesitation phenomena (filled and unfilled pauses, repetitions and retraced false starts) showed no significant group differences. However, in the case of the unfilled pauses there was a significant program x sex interaction ($F = 7.26$, $p < .05$). Further analysis revealed that the female students in the early immersion program ($\bar{X}$ = 13.88) produced significantly more unfilled pauses than the male students ($\bar{X}$ = 2.86), whereas in the case of the Cycle I immersion program the male students ($\bar{X}$ = 6.50) produced slightly more such pauses than the female students ($\bar{X}$ = 4.71).

When the performance of the two immersion groups is compared to that of the francophone control group a number of significant differences are revealed (for a summary of the results see Table 2). First, the francophone students ($\bar{X}$ = 41.22) produced significantly more correct T-units than the two immersion groups (early immersion $\bar{X}$ = 20.73, Cycle I immersion $\bar{X}$ = 17.93). The percentage of correct T-units produced by the francophone students (86%) was also significantly higher than those produced by the early immersion students (42%) and the Cycle I immersion students (35%). Next, the francophone students ($\bar{X}$ = 3.89) had significantly fewer word and/or letter repetitions in their speech than the early immersion students ($\bar{X}$ = 13.27) and the Cycle I immersion students ($\bar{X}$ = 12.80). The francophone students ($\bar{X}$ = 3.67) also produced significantly fewer retraced false starts than the early immersion students ($\bar{X}$ = 8.27) and the Cycle I students ($\bar{X}$ = 9.20). Moreover, both the francophone students ($\bar{X}$ = 7.40) and the early

immersion students ($\bar{X}$ = 7.13) produced significantly longer correct T-units than the Cycle I immersion students ($\bar{X}$ = 6.22). There was no significant difference between the francophone students and the early immersion students on this measure.

Interestingly there were no significant differences between the francophone group and the two immersion groups on the purely quantitative measures (average number of T-units, average number of words and average length of a T-unit). In a similar vein, there were no significant differences among the three groups in terms of filled and unfilled pauses.

Summary and Discussion

The results of this study can be summarized as follows:

(1) The early immersion students produced significantly longer correct T-units than the Cycle I immersion students.

(2) The female students in both programs produced significantly more T-units than the male students. The female students produced also more correct T-units than the male students. However, the percentage of correct T-units produced by the female students did not differ significantly from that produced by the male students.

(3) There were no significant program or sex differences on any of the measures pertaining to the hesitation phenomena.

(4) The two immersion groups produced significantly fewer correct T-units than the French control group.

(5) The Cycle I immersion group produced significantly shorter correct T-units than the French control group and there was no significant

difference between the latter group and the early immersion group on this measure.

(6) The two immersion groups had significantly more repetitions and false starts in their speech than the French control group.

The findings of this study reveal several interesting patterns of second language development. First, although the early immersion students differed from the Cycle I students on only one measure (average length of a correct T-unit), this measure seems to be an important one. Larsen-Freeman (1978) found that the average length of a correct T-unit and the percentage of correct T-units were the best discriminators among five levels of English second language proficiency. The finding that, in the present study, the difference between the percentages of correct T-units produced by the two immersion groups did not reach statistical significance suggests that the two groups differ from one another only on a limited range of skills. Moreover, these skills may pertain only to oral proficiency since a previous study based on a T-unit analysis of the written production of early immersion and Cycle I immersion students did not reveal any significant differences between these two groups (Adiv and Walsh, Note 5). It is possible that this difference between oral and written proficiency is associated with two different types of knowledge the learner may have of the second language, namely implicit and explicit knowledge (Bialystok, 1978). In written expression where the learner is not under the same kind of time pressure as in oral communication, he or she can use both types of knowledge, i.e., here the learner can appeal to his/her intuitive knowledge of the language as well as to his/her more conscious knowledge of the

grammar. On the other hand, in oral communication, the learner has less time to monitor his/her output and is, therefore, likely to rely more heavily on his/her implicit knowledge of the language. It is precisely this kind of knowledge which early immersion students may have developed more extensively because of the young age at which they started to learn the second language and because of the longer duration of their immersion experience.

Second, in terms of communicative skills, the findings of this study seem to indicate that both groups of immersion students can sustain a monologue in French to the same extent that native speakers of the same age do. Moreover, when linguistic accuracy is not considered, the average T-unit length produced by the two immersion groups is similar to that of the francophone students. These findings suggest that immersion students do not confine themselves to simple short sentences when they express themselves in French. However, the marked differences between the immersion students and the francophones that emerge when morpho-syntactic and lexical criteria are taken into account support the conclusions of previous studies (Adiv, Notes 2 and 3) which noted that the immersion students' communicative skills far exceeded their grammatical competence in French. The findings of the present study add a further dimension to the previous findings, namely that the female students were found to be more verbal than the male students, although there were no qualitative differences in the oral production of these two groups.

Third, the finding that the two immersion groups did not differ significantly from the French control group in terms of filled and unfilled

pauses is quite surprising, since one would expect second language learners to be more hesitant in their speech than native speakers (see, for instance, Sajavaava and Lehtonen, 1978, with regard to pause patterns of native Swedish and Finnish speakers learning English as a second language). Interestingly, the informal comparison of the numerical values obtained for these two variables do show certain differences between the groups. However, closer investigation of the results of the statistical analyses reveals a great deal of individual variation within each group, suggesting that hesitation phenomena may be associated, to some extent, with personal characteristics of speech production.

On the other hand, there were significant differences between the immersion students and the native speakers on the other two variables related to the hesitation phenomena (repetition of words or letters and retraced false starts). Here the immersion students produced significantly more superfluous verbalizations than the francophone students. The difference was most pronounced in the case of the repetition of words and letters. These findings suggest that second language learners do need more planning time than native speakers. Alternatively, it is also possible that the two variables on which there are significant differences between immersion and francophone students are more closely associated with speech monitoring than with verbal planning per se. In other words, a considerable amount of the second language learners' superfluous verbalizations may reflect his/her awareness of the discrepancy between his/her verbal output and the form that should be produced in these instances (see Bialystok 1978 and Krashen 1977 with regard to a monitoring model

for second language learners). It is of interest to note that, contrary to MacWhinney and Osser's (1977) findings for first language performance, this study revealed no significant differences between male and female students in terms of superfluous verbalizations.

Another difference between the immersion students and the native-speakers was one which was not revealed in the statistical analysis of the data, namely the content of the filled pauses. Expressions such as ou ben, ben donc, pis là, t'sais were never produced by the immersion students who used either one-word connectors which standard French pronounciation such as puis and alors ... or interjections such as hm... and ah... These differences between the native register and the immersion students' French suggest that the absence of contact with native peers results not only in a slower development of second language proficiency in terms of grammar and vocabulary(Adiv, Notes 2 and 3; Selinker, Swain & Dumas, 1975; Spilka, 1976), but also in a lack of familiarity with the stylistic characteristics of the social register used outside the classroom.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that discourse analysis may reveal insights into certain aspects of second language development which have not been considered previously. The findings that early immersion students may develop a better intuitive knowledge of the second language than late immersion students certainly merits further investigation. Moreover, the present study has only touched upon the issue of socio-linguistic differences between immersion students and native speakers. Further research into this area could provide educators involved in the planning of immersion courses with information as to whether

certain characteristics of the spoken French register should be incorporated into the program in order to enable students to feel linguistically more at ease in the local French milieu.

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Table 1

Summary of Results According to Program and Sex

	Early Immersion		Cycle I Immersion		F ratios	
	male	female	male	female	Program	Sex
Number of T-units	39.57	52.75	45.12	55.71	0.60	4.68*
Number of words	325.43	410.25	353.75	401.14	0.00	2.51
Length of T-unit	8.30	8.18	7.80	7.09	3.17	0.88
Correct T-units	15.86	25.00	15.62	20.57	0.48	4.41*
Percentage[a] correct T-units	(38) 1.33	(46) 1.50	(33) 1.22	(37) 1.30	1.68	2.74
Length of correct T-unit	6.92	7.30	6.34	6.09	5.44*	0.03
Unfilled pauses[b]	2.86	13.88	6.50	4.71	1.35	3.78
Filled pauses	26.29	18.00	19.62	25.57	0.01	0.08
Repetitions	13.71	12.88	12.62	13.00	0.02	0.00
Retraced false starts	7.86	8.62	10.25	8.00	0.26	0.18

*$p < .05$

[a]Analysis based on transformed ratios. Percentages given in parentheses.

[b]Program x sex interaction $F = 7.26$*

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Table 2

Summary of Results Comparing Early Immersion and Cyle I Immersion with French Controls[A]

	Early Im.	Cycle I Im.	French C.	F ratio	df
Number of T-units	46.60	50.07	48.22	0.22	2,36
Number of words	381.33	375.87	366.56	0.04	2,36
Length of T-unit	8.24	7.47	7.66	1.86	2,36
Correct T-units	20.73	17.93	41.22	19.82***	2,36
Percentage[B] correct T-units	(42) 1.42	(35) 1.26	(86) 2.18	63.67***	2,36
Length of correct T-unit	7.13	6.22	7.40	4.90*	2,36
Unfilled pauses	8.73	5.67	9.67	1.05	2,36
Filled pauses	21.87	22.40	13.00	2.54	2,36
Repetitions	13.27	12.80	3.89	3.54*	2,36
Retraced false starts	8.27	9.20	3.67	4.73*	2,36

*p < .05

***p < .001

[A]Means joined by a line differ significantly from one another

[B]Analysis based on transformed ratios. Percentages given in parentheses.